DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 839 EA 006 196

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Ottina, John R. |
| TITLE | The Federal Commitment to Education. |
| PUB DATE | Apr 74 |
| NOTE | 8p.; Paper presented at DHEW Communications Seminar (New York, New York, April 1974) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE |
| DESCRIPTORS | Bilingual Education; *Compensatory Education; *Equal Education; *Federal Aid; *Federal Programs; Grants; *Student Loan Programs |
| IDENTIFIERS | Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I; ESEA Title I |

ABSTRACT

The most important principle in Federal education policy is equal access to a good education for every young person, irrespective of race, faith, family circumstance, cultural background, age, or sex, and irrespective of any physical or mental handicap. The Office of Education is doing many things to help the States and local school districts provide equal access. This paper discusses such programs as Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, Guaranteed Student Loans, Work Study programs, the Emergency School Aid Act, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Right to Read, and bilingual projects. (Author/JF)

ED 091839

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

# THE FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION*

By
John Ottina
U.S. Commissioner of Education

The most important principle in Federal education policy is equal access to a good education for every young person, irrespective of race, faith, family circumstance, cultural background, age, or sex, and irrespective of any physical or mental handicap.

President Nixon forcefully underscored this Administration's commitment to the principle of equal access in his January education message to the Congress. It now appears the Federal legislative branch intends to give that principle the force of law. And the Federal judiciary, and State courts and legislatures as well, have begun to spell out the responsibilities of State education agencies and local districts that are inherent in the principle.

What does equal access mean? It means special programs to meet the needs of children who enter school speaking only Spanish, say, or Navajo or Chinese. It means special help for deaf, retarded, and other handicapped children. It means incentive programs for the gifted and talented. It means fairer access for women to schools of medicine, law, engineering, architecture, and other traditionally male oriented professions. It means training in marketable skills for welfare mothers and new career or avocational programs for senior citizens. It means remedial programs for millions of educationally disadvantaged children and young people--meanwhile seeking better ways to help these children.

---

*Prepared for the DHEW Communications Seminar, Delmonico Hotel, New York, N.Y., April 17, 1974.

EA 006 196

It means that school boards, administrators, teachers, curriculum developers, and just about everyone else involved in education, are going to have to make some major adjustments all along the line.

The Office of Education is doing many things to help the States and local school districts provide equal access. Before I tell you about them, however, I should make the point that, at least on the fiscal side, ours is a supportive role.

Education has always been, and is today, predominately a State responsibility, and the States are increasingly recognizing their obligation to education. It's encouraging to note that they used 65 percent of the $643 million in Federal general revenue sharing money made available to them in the 18 months January 1, 1972, through June 30, 1973, to finance educational services. Thirty nine percent of these funds went for new services.

The Federal role is to help States and communities build their capacity to provide equal access. This means Federal support for research and the testing and dissemination of new techniques for teaching students with education problems. Federal support also includes teacher training, curriculum development, and technical assistance to States and local education agencies.

A most important down-to-earth Federal contribution to equal access is a package of financial aids for postsecondary students--a combination of grants and loans designed to help any young person who wants postsecondary training and needs financial assistance. The Administration's position is that lack of money should bar no qualified student from pursuing a career or other personal goal that requires advanced education. That

position is dramatically reflected in the increase in student aid funds in the past 6 years. In 1968 the Office of Education had only $550 million to support student aid programs. This year the total is nearly $2 billion, nearly four times as much.

The central element of the student aid package is the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants program, an Administration initiative authorized by the Congress in June 1972 and first funded late last spring.

Basic Grants are non-repayable and go directly to needy students so that they can select the college, university, or other postsecondary institution that best suits their individual interests and aptitudes. This is a real departure from the approach of most other student aid programs, which have channeled funds to students through the institutions.

The Basic Grants mechanism was put together by July 1973, and a nationwide publicity campaign was mounted in an effort to reach as many needy students as possible in time for the 1973-74 academic year. By the end of February of this year, almost 500,000 students had applied, and 53 percent of them had been found eligible for grants. Average turnaround time between application and notification of eligibility or non-eligibility was three weeks.

Because of fund limitations, Basic Grants were available only to first-year students in 1973-74. With $475 million appropriated for the upcoming academic year, we can offer support to both first and second-year students. We hope to assist at least a million. For fiscal year 1975 the President has asked for $1.3 billion, which would permit awards to some 1.6 million students in all 4 years of undergraduate education. The maximum grants would for the first time reach the authorized $1,400.

Getting the word out to students is our major objective at the moment, for this is the time of year they are applying for admission and financial aid. High school guidance counselors and financial aid officers of post-secondary institutions now have Basic Grant application blanks and brochures for the 1974-75 school year. Their professional associations are cooperating with us in holding workshops to acquaint their members with Basic Grant policies and procedures. Fifteen radio spots encouraging students to apply will be distributed this month, and five TV spots will follow shortly.

Other important elements of the student aid package are the Guaranteed Student Loan and College Work-Study programs.

Guaranteed Student Loans are designed both for needy students receiving Basic Grants and for middle income students who are not eligible for Basic Grants but who do need help and are willing to repay over a period of years after leaving school.

The number of Guaranteed Student Loans was down last year--to about 936,000 compared to 1.1 million in 1972. In part this was because generally high interest rates created opportunities for competitively high rates of return to lenders on other types of loans. Another contributing factor was introduction of a rigorous needs test for students applying for subsidized loans. We hope that a relaxation of this test will generate more loans this year. A third major reason for the fall in loan volume in 1973 was a lack of liquidity in lenders' portfolios. This problem was considerably eased by the creation of the Student Loan Marketing Association-- Sallie Mae.

In spite of everything, the Guaranteed Loan program from its inception in 1966 to date has generated nearly 7 million loans totaling $7 billion.

Students in New York State have taken out more than a million loans for more than $1 billion. New Jersey students have made 282,000 loans for $313 million.

The College Work-Study Program gives a postsecondary student the opportunity to earn part of his way by working part time, either for his institution or for a non-profit organization or agency of a public service nature-- a hospital, for instance. The Federal Government pays 80 percent of his salary, his school or other employer pays the rest.

The College Work-Study program enrolls more than half a million students a year.

Some 41,000 New York students participate in it. New Jersey has more than 13,000, and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands together have about 8,000.

Let me turn now to the equal access principle as it applies to elementary and secondary education.

The Emergency School Aid Act was passed in 1972 as a short-term measure to help schools deal with the problems of desegregation. The legislation authorized Federal support for recruitment and training, guidance and counseling, instructional materials, and similar activities associated with desegregation.

By the time ESAA expires this June, some 1,260 grants will have gone to school districts to bring such additional services to 10 million children. Most of the aid has been in formula grants to States for redistribution to local school systems. We are now working on a legislative proposal to replace ESAA that would directly target those local school districts still in need of desegregation assistance. Funds would be awarded through National competition, not by State formula.

Of course, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the largest Federal education program. For nearly a decade it has focused on remedial reading and other compensatory activities for children whose economic disadvantage in a very real sense denies them equal access to education. With an appropriation of $1.7 billion for fiscal 1974, Title I is benefiting some 6 million children.

ESEA expires this coming June 30. The House has developed one bill to extend it, the Senate a different bill.

It is appropriate here to comment on the Title I formula proposed in each. I won't go into the intricacies of the O. shansky formula in the House bill, except to say that we feel it takes into account population shifts in recent years and provides for more equitable distribution of funds among States than has been the case in recent years. While the Senate version has a "base year" provision to guarantee large cities like New York no loss of funds in fiscal 1975, compared with 1974, the House formula will mean a substantial loss to New York. We would be receptive to some modification in the House formula to provide fairer treatment for large cities, but we do not agree with the Senate's base year concept, which in effect keeps the 1960 census data in use for the bulk of the distribution rather than using 1970 census figures.

Billions of Title I dollars have been channeled through the States since the mid-1960s. On the whole they have been effectively used to provide compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children in local school systems. In a few States there have been instances of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Title I regulations regarding allowable expenditures. A DHEW audit report indicates that New York

improperly used Title I funds to support activities formerly supported by State or local tax levies. We are continuing discussions on the matter with State education officials.

I will close with brief mentions of one or two other programs that stress Office of Education efforts to help provide equal access to education.

Right to Read, a $12-million program that is stimulating much larger commitments by States and localities, seeks nothing less than an end to functional illiteracy in America by 1980. New York has seven school based Right to Read sites at work on the reading problems of children and six community based sites demonstrating the teaching of reading to adults, plus over $1.5 million in State planning and coordinating funds. New Jersey has two school projects and three adult sites; its State funds come to about $1 million.

Bilingual projects are showing how schools can give non-English speaking children a better opportunity to succeed by teaching them simultaneously in their own language and in English.

Puerto Rico has an interesting junior high school project that reverses the usual Spanish-to-English transition. Many Puerto Rican families are returning from the continental United States to live in their sunny Puerto Rico. Fluent in English, their children enter schools where Spanish is the instructional language, so they must learn Spanish as a second language.

We are seeking an amendment to our fiscal 1975 budget request that would double the $35 million already requested for Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the bilingual education title. This would permit us to allocate more funds to train

bilingual teachers, now in critically short supply, and to support demonstration projects and the development of bilingual instructional materials. A request is also being made to increase by $4.5 million the appropriation to the National Institute of Education for research and related efforts in bilingual education.

I think Federal efforts in behalf of equal access for all students speak for themselves. They are real. They are functioning in most cases as they were designed to function. And we see encouraging signs of success.

###